

DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Distinctive Faith and Character Based Programs Begin at Two Louisiana Correctional Facilities**

(Baton Rouge) Building upon the successful character and faith-based initiatives already established in Louisiana correctional facilities, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections is offering a new curriculum for offenders. Faith and Character Based Dormitory programs have opened at both the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) in St. Gabriel and Dixon Correctional Institute (DCI) in Jackson.

These pilot programs help to facilitate inmate institutional adjustment, rehabilitation, reintegration into the community and a reduction in recidivism. Statistics show that inmates completing faith-based programming in Louisiana institutions have the lowest recidivism rates compared to other programs. Participation is strictly voluntary and the programs do not attempt to convert an inmate toward a particular faith or religious preference. Nightly weekday and weekend activities allow inmates to continue academic and vocational programs or work assignments during the day.

"The Department does an excellent job in making educational and other rehabilitative programs available to those who show a willingness to make a change in their life. It can be all for naught, however, if we do not address the moral and character issues that play a major role in making our lives meaningful," explained DCI Warden James LeBlanc.

"We've had a tremendously positive response from both inmates and volunteers," said LCIW Warden Johnnie Jones. "Even at this early stage, we are very encouraged."

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Faith and Character Based Dormitory programming seeks to maximize the positive influence of three powerful forces:

1. The power of personal faith or a positive belief system
2. The power of positive peer pressure
3. The power of a positive role model through mentoring

DCI's program houses 207 inmates in an open dormitory setting, while LCIW's program accommodates 75 inmates, also housed together to foster a positive and productive atmosphere.

Chaplains, institutional staff and qualified, well-trained community volunteers will handle intensive programming designed to facilitate the inmate's personal growth in three main areas:

- **Religious and character-based** studies promote the development of a positive value and belief system both in and outside the prison.
- **Life skills** programs teach money management, employability skills, parenting, communications and substance abuse treatment necessary for inmates to make a successful re-entry into society.
- **Mentoring** provides positive role models to encourage growth in an inmate's personal awareness and maturity and enhances the power to change through personal relationships and accountability.

"Some [participants] are believers and some are seekers. Their written work, the notes taken, the questions asked and the overall positive attitudes are all indicators that there is a work going on in lives that will make a difference at LCIW and outside," said LCIW volunteer Barbara Braud, who teaches character development.

Inmates must maintain a certain performance level (based on attitude, participation, attendance, etc.) in order to continue in the program.

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